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A. HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

162 Until the twelfth century the marshes and forest-lands along the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea were left in the more or less undisturbed possession of a number of pagan tribes. The Esths and Livs[1] in the northern regions belonged to the Finnish branch of the Ural-Altaic family, while another group farther to the south, subdivided into Letts, Borussians, and Lithuanians, besides a number of other branches, was of Indo-European stock. The Borussians, who moved southward to what is now East Prussia, were early subdued and assimilated by the Germans, while the Letts tended to push northward into Livonia.

797 167 *The Teutonic Orders.* The first invaders of these regions were the Danes, who conquered the northern half of Estonia in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. German merchants and missionaries had meanwhile penetrated into Livonia, where a bishopric was established at Riga in 1201. From then onwards the greater part of the areas now occupied by the States of Latvia and Estonia gradually fell under the dominion first of the Knights of the Sword, and then of the Order of Teutonic Knights, to whom, in 1346, the Danes sold their share of Estonia. These Orders colonized the territory, converted the inhabitants to Christianity, and made them their serfs. Their lineal descendants, the Baltic Barons, maintained their position as the land-owning class until recent times, in spite of the fact that the territory eventually passed into the hands of Sweden and Poland, and finally into those of Russia.

In Lithuania, on the other hand, the Teutonic Knights were never able to make much headway except in the Memel territory, of which the frontier was permanently fixed after the defeat of the Order at Tannenberg in 1410 by Vytautas—one of a succession of Lithuanian Grand Dukes who, in the course of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, built up a united and powerful State and helped to check the Tartar invasion of Europe.

648 *Poland and Sweden (1386–1709).* After the death of Vytautas in 1430, Lithuania rapidly fell into a position of dependence on Poland, with which country she had already been nominally connected under

197 162 [1] According to Prince P. A. Kropotkin the native language of the Livs was of Finnish origin, though they now speak a Lettish *patois*. (*See Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edition, vol. xvi, p. 817.) The Livs are now practically extinct, though there is a small community of them, some 1,500 strong, in modern Latvia.

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ripening fruits of tomorrow through the telescope of History—that is asking too much. There must be, after all, some standard one dare not destroy lest the fruits of tomorrow prove to be rotten. If I think thus it is because for the last two thousand years or more there have been not only brigands, conquistadors, and hangmen, but also people for whom evil was evil and had to be called evil. Mass slaughter, the terror of revolution, the craze for gold, the misery of the working classes: who knows what dimensions these flaws might reach if every man believed he must keep silent and accept? In rebelling, I believe I protect the fruits of tomorrow better than my friend who keeps silent. I assume the risk and I pay. If I were not willing to do so, I would now be writing an ode in praise of the Generalissimo. When one has some training in poetic technique, it is not particularly difficult to compose fine-sounding, rhythmical praise of *The Glorious Hero.*

The Baltic states—Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia—lie, as we know, on the edge of the great mainland of the continent. A gulf separates them from Finland; the Baltic Sea, from Sweden. Their inhabitants are not Slavic. The language of the Estonians is related to Finnish. The Lithuanian and Latvian tongues, which resemble each other, still constitute a linguistic riddle; no one knows the original home of these tribes who found their way to the lower reaches of the Niemen and Dvina rivers. We know only that the exterminated Prussians spoke a similar language. Of the three Baltic nations, only the Lithuanians succeeded in the past in creating and maintaining for a certain time a large state whose borders extended to the Dnieper.

These three sparsely settled countries underwent an intensive colonization, chiefly German and Polish, which marked the advance of Christianity. The result was

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197 that two different languages entered into use there: the masters, that is the landholders, spoke German (in Estonia and Latvia) and Polish (in Lithuania) in part because the newcomers brought with them their own language and customs, and in part because the local nobility adopted them. The common people, however, spoke their native tongue and preserved their cultural heritage from a legendary past. After the First World War, these three countries ceased to be provinces of the Russian Tsardom and became independent. Radical agrarian reforms curbed the influence of the great landowners. The native tongues became the official languages, while literature and education restored popular traditions.

161 241 In 1939, the population of these three states numbered about six million, that is, a little more than the population of Chile, a little less than that of Sweden. They were agricultural countries whose economies were maintained by a well-organized exportation of bacon, eggs, butter, grain, and fowl to Western Europe. In this, as well as in other respects, they resembled Denmark. Whoever knows the patterns of farming life can easily picture the mode of existence of these Baltic regions. A widespread system of 511 cooperatives helped the farmer sell his products. His standard of living, judging by his appearance, his house and his diet, was higher than that of the Slavonic countries, 162 with the possible exception of Czechoslovakia. Most Es- 186 tonians and Latvians were Protestant; most Lithuanians, Catholic. All three nations were characterized by obstinate patriotism, or even chauvinism—which is understandable in terms of their hard past. Militarily, all three were defenseless.

175 648 The fate of these states was decided in the talks between Molotov and Ribbentrop. In the fall of 1939, Molotov demanded military bases; the Baltic governments hurried